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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001605

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [JO](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [TC](#)

SUBJECT: SHEIKH HAMDAN ON IRAQ, GAZA, MLAT

REF: ABU DHABI 1604

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed (HbZ) and Ambassador met April 10 to review regional developments and U.S.-UAE relations. The UAE remains very worried about Iranian influence in Iraq. HbZ urged the U.S. to stand behind Mahmoud Abbas on Gaza disengagement. He said that progress on MLAT negotiations and exploratory discussions on an extradition treaty could restore stalled U.S.-UAE judicial cooperation. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Ambassador called on Deputy Prime Minister and de facto Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamdan on April 10 for a review of regional and bilateral issues. Attending were MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid Al Noaimi; HbZ's office manager Ambassador Sultan Al Romeithi; Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed's special adviser Yousef Al Otaiba; and Pol Chief.

Iraq

13. (C) HbZ, commenting on the formation of the Iraqi transitional government, said that the UAE continues to have "deep concerns" about Iranian intervention in Iraq's internal affairs. He expressed concern about the cabinet make-up. He noted that Iraqi Sunnis with a "more liberal outlook" were likely to become targets of assassination or terrorist attacks sponsored by Iranian intelligence. Sunnis would be even more at risk if the sensitive post of Interior Minister went to someone close to Iranian intelligence, he warned. HbZ said the period leading up to the year-end elections would be critical, and that it was "imperative" for the U.S., the UAE, and other allies to develop a strategy for limiting Iran's influence in Iraq. Iran has a strategy and it was not just about Iran's policy toward Iraq. It was a clear program toward building up its nuclear program. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. welcomed the formation of the Iraqi transitional government as an important step on the road to democracy, as well as efforts to promote inclusiveness in the Iraqi political system. She also noted that the U.S. and UAE had shared concerns on Iraq's nuclear program. HbZ said he welcomed the opportunity to discuss developments in Iraq and to offer frank advice about the situation in Iraq to the USG with Ambassador Dick Jones later in the week.

Palestinians

14. (C) HbZ then raised the Israeli-Palestinian issue, noting that Prime Minister Sharon's visit to the U.S. was an opportunity for the U.S. to support Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Gaza disengagement. The Ambassador commented that the U.S. welcomed engagement by both the Palestinians and the Israelis in preparing for Gaza disengagement. She noted the recent discussions between Deputy Secretary Zoellick and Shimon Peres to discuss the Israeli disengagement from Gaza, and in particular economic issues relating to Gaza disengagement. She thanked HbZ for the UAE's positive efforts to help in that region and generous humanitarian assistance. We try to help strengthen the Palestinian Authority in any way we can, HbZ asserted.

Jordan Oil

15. (C) The Ambassador inquired about additional UAE financial assistance to Jordan to compensate for Jordan's higher oil prices. HbZ said he would follow up on this issue with Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed, as Abu Dhabi Emirate rather than the Ministry of Finance would be examining this issue. He added that the UAE would be signing an agreement within days to loan \$8 million to Jordan - on top of an earlier \$42 million loan.

Free Trade Agreement

16. (C) After discussing the camel jockey issue (covered in reftel), HbZ addressed Ambassador's concerns that we not lose our momentum on U.S.-UAE FTA negotiations. HbZ said he remains in constant contact with MinState Finance Kharbash, who heads the UAE's FTA delegation, and that the UAE side was very satisfied with the progress and pace. HbZ emphasized

that he wants to move rapidly on concluding the FTA. He indicated that there remained some private sector debate on the negotiations, but that the UAEG was determined to place national interests above any private interests. Noting the Saudi Trade Minister's travel to the U.S., HbZ smiled and said confidently that the UAE would get an FTA before the Saudis.

High-level Visits to the U.S.

17. (C) At present, HbZ said he had no plans to visit the United States. HbZ added that he had relinquished responsibility for the U.S.-UAE Strategic Partnership to his brother, Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah, who had led the UAE delegation at the last bilateral dialogue in Abu Dhabi in February 2004. After the meeting, Yousef Al Otaiba, the special advisor to the Crown Prince, told Ambassador that Sheikh Mohammed would not be traveling to the United States until after the fall, as President Khalifa will travel to Western Europe this summer for both vacation and official duties and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed would need to remain behind for Abu Dhabi continuity.

Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty

18. (C) Turning to U.S.-UAE judicial cooperation, the Ambassador reviewed progress on MLAT negotiations that took place in Washington in February, noting the USG's clear preference for separating the MLAT and extradition treaties and moving to the second round of MLAT negotiations before the end of June. The Ambassador also said she appreciated UAEG concerns about reciprocity and said the USG intended to address the issue in a diplomatic note in the very near future. The Ambassador also indicated that the U.S. wants to get the relationship back on track as we approach the second round of treaty negotiations. HbZ agreed with MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid that while the MLAT discussion had been good, the UAE side had come away "disappointed" from the talks in Washington because the U.S. side "had not been authorized" to negotiate an extradition treaty. "We want some movement on the U.S. part. Our track (extradition) has not moved," Abdullah Rashid said. Both sides agreed on the importance of restoring effective judicial cooperation, however.

19. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
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